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ABSTRACT

Although the federal government, the private sector, and local literacy providers all have important roles in national literacy policy, the goals, shape, and content of the system for enhancing adult literacy in the United States will be developed and implemented by the states. A national commitment to adult literacy will thus mean different policies in different states. There are several reasons why the states have been deemed the appropriate level of government to manage the tasks involved in building a new literacy infrastructure. They have traditionally been responsible for managing educational enterprises, they now manage most federal programs that can be used to expand the resources available for various target groups of adults, they have the flexibility to develop a mix of programs for their unique target groups of adults requiring literacy enhancement, and they have developed substantial expertise in working with the employer community for economic development and job training. The recent history of state involvement in adult literacy policy indicates that although many states have indeed come a long way in developing an effective literacy policy, many others have far to go. (This report explores many of the questions related to state establishment and management of adult literacy programs.) (MN)

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THE STATE ROLE IN ADULT LITERACY POLICY

by

Jack A. Brizius
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Background Paper Prepared for

Project on Adult Literacy

of the

Southport Institute for Policy Analysis

December 1988

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FOREWORD

This paper is one of several prepared by consultants to The Project on Adult Literacy sponsored by the Southport Institute for Policy Analysis. The papers were commissioned to help the Project's staff develop an in-depth understanding of various issues and perspectives bearing on the federal role in promoting adult literacy.

In total, seven papers were commissioned. They were prepared during the fall of 1988. The consultants who prepared them met as a group five times during that period and vigorously debated each other's work as well as other issues concerning adult literacy. At no time during this process did the Project's staff require that the consultants agree with each other or with the conclusions being formulated by the staff. The consultants were given complete freedom to state their own ideas.

As a result, the views expressed in this paper are those of the author alone. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Southport Institute, the Project on Adult Literacy or any of the other consultants involved with the Project's work.

The Southport Institute is making these working papers available to help increase understanding and stimulate discussion about the problems of adult literacy and as an expression of gratitude for the contribution of the authors to the Project on Adult Literacy.

The working papers prepared for the Project are:

Judith A. Alamprese:	Adult Research and Development: An Agenda for Action
William B. Bliss:	Providing Adult Basic Education Services to Adults with Limited English Proficiency
Jack A. Brizius:	The State Role in Adult Literacy Policy
Paul V. Delker and William J. Yakowicz:	Toward the Vision of a Literate Society
Susan E. Foster:	Professionalization of the Adult Literacy Workforce
Arnold Packer:	Retooling the American Workforce: The Role of Technology in Improving Adult Literacy During the 1990s
William F. Pierce:	A Redefined Federal Role in Adult Literacy: Integrated Policies, Programs, and Procedures

These papers are available from: The Project on Adult Literacy, Suite 415, 440 First Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20001, (202) 783-7058.

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THE STATE ROLE IN ADULT LITERACY POLICY

by

Jack A. Brizius

INTRODUCTION

A national commitment to enhance adult literacy will require leadership, research and development, dissemination of new approaches to literacy instruction and financial support from the federal government. The work — educating adults in basic skills of reading, writing, computing and communicating — will be done at the local level. This work will be accomplished in community colleges, storefronts, factories, offices, shopping centers, high schools, libraries and all kinds of local settings. The work will be undertaken by full-time teachers, part-time instructors, volunteer tutors and many others. Some programs will use computers; others will not. The students will be recent immigrants, welfare mothers, steel and auto workers, prisoners, dropouts, and many others. The private sector will be involved, urging and requiring their workers to upgrade their skills. In the process, a national system of adult basic education will emerge.

While the federal government, the private sector and local literacy providers all have important roles in national literacy policy, the goals, shape and content of the system for enhancing adult literacy in America will be developed and implemented by the states. A national commitment to adult literacy will mean different policies in differing states. Within the context of federal priorities, some states will choose to focus their major efforts on immigrants, while others will work to enhance the literacy of displaced workers. Some will concentrate programs on the least skilled; others will decide that their best investments in adult literacy are to help adults achieve a high school diploma.

A national effort to enhance the literacy of adults will require the construction of a system of education for adults. Building on the foundation of previous efforts, the states face the task of developing a redesigned system which offers millions of adults a chance to upgrade basic skills. This task is fundamentally different from other important issues confronting the states. In elementary and secondary education, for example, the task is to reform a

large and expensive existing service system. In higher education, states must improve the quality of education and address issues of equity and access. In adult literacy policy, no fully developed system exists to be reformed. State policymakers are starting from a very small commitment to adult learning. To meet the challenge of adult literacy across the country, state policymakers must design and implement a new system of literacy provision that will ultimately rival in size and scope many other state activities.

Federal policies can help direct the development of a national literacy system. Federal policymakers can help set priorities. Federal funds can influence state behavior. Federal research and development activities can guide states toward effective programs. Federal support can help states provide the infrastructure for the system of adult literacy efforts that must be created, including training and professionalization of literacy instructors. Federal programs can be made more flexible, allowing states to target federal and state resources to help build a redesigned system of literacy provision.

Even with federal leadership and support, the states will have to plan and execute the redesign and construction of a new system of literacy enhancement. If state leaders see adult literacy as central to their efforts to improve the economies and education of their people, they will respond wholeheartedly to the challenge. If they do not, national adult literacy policy will stagnate, victim of another attempt by federal bureaucracies to influence state political leaders in response to national constituencies that do not appear to exist at the state level.

In building a national policy for adult literacy, what should constitute the state role? Where, between the exhortations of national leaders and the day-to-day delivery of services at the local level, should state officials work? How can the states work to build a new system of literacy services sufficient to tackle the massive job that national leaders have defined?

ADULT LITERACY IN THE STATES

In exploring the state role in literacy enhancement, it will be valuable to examine the scope and variety of the literacy problem in states and to describe the current system of services available to adults seeking to upgrade basic skills. Literacy can be defined as a continuum of skills, ranging from the most basic levels of reading, writing, computing and communicating to more sophisticated abilities, such as problem-solving and creative thinking. Each state's population needing basic skills improvements differs from others in the nation: in size, socio-economic status, racial and ethnic composition, connection to the labor

force and in many other ways. In addition, each state's economy, political and social environment and current investment in literacy services differs from its neighbors.

Because literacy can be viewed as a continuum, it is difficult to quantify the state of literacy in the states or in the nation as a whole. One can, however, make some estimates of the distribution of the population with low skills, based on information gathered from the English Language Proficiency Study (ELPS) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) studies conducted in 1984 and 1985. Based on these studies, the author has estimated the percentage of the adult population aged 18-64 who have low literacy skills. Map 1 depicts these percentages graphically.

Adults lacking adequate basic skills comprise significant proportions of the populations in nearly all the states, ranging from six to sixteen percent. The largest percentage concentrations of adults with very low skills can be found in the South and in states that have recently received large numbers of immigrants. In the Northeast, literacy problems are most severe in central cities and among large populations of recent immigrants. In the upper Midwest and in the central western part of the United States, the problem of basic skills is not as severe as elsewhere. Nevertheless, significant proportions of the populations of all the states have inadequate skills.

Some experts believe that these data underestimate the basic skills problem significantly, primarily because the instruments used to collect the data measure only very low skills. If one defines basic skills as including the ability to do a two-step calculation or interpret the meaning of a long paragraph, for example, one might roughly double the estimates presented here. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) study of young adults, for example, while the overwhelming majority of young adults adequately perform lower level tasks, sizeable numbers are unable to do well on tasks of moderate complexity and only a very small percentage more complex and challenging tasks.

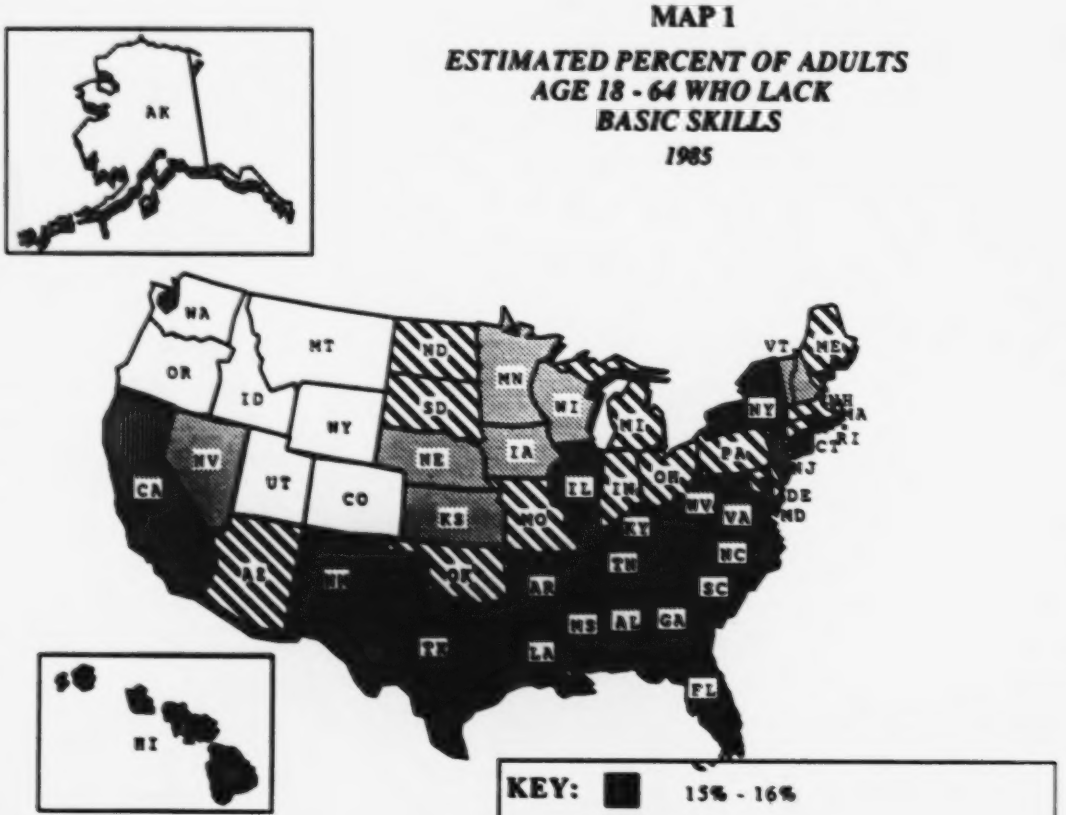
On the supply side of the basic skills equation are estimates of enrollments in a variety of literacy service programs. Unfortunately, data about the supply of literacy services are even more scarce than estimates concerning the nature and distribution of the problem. Volunteer tutoring organizations such as the Literacy Volunteers of America or Laubach Literacy estimate that the number of volunteer literacy tutors has reached nearly 200,000 across the United States. Volunteers working with adult education providers funded through the federal adult education program numbered 57,000 in 1987. Possibly the best estimates of

the availability of literacy services are enrollment figures for adult education programs provided by the federal government. These enrollment figures include three types of programs: adult basic education (grades 0-8), English as a second language, and adult secondary education (grades 9-12). Table 1 depicts the distribution of enrollments in these programs during 1987. It should be stressed that these are enrollments only. These figures do not reflect the duration of those enrollments.

MAP 1

ESTIMATED PERCENT OF ADULTS AGE 18 - 64 WHO LACK BASIC SKILLS

1985



Source: Brizius & Foster, State Policy Data Book '88.

TABLE 1: ENROLLMENTS IN ADULT EDUCATION, 1987

State	Number
CALIFORNIA	1,400,000
FLORIDA	389,206
MICHIGAN	221,785
TEXAS	204,787
NEW YORK	107,846
NORTH CAROLINA	102,577
OHIO	72,625
SOUTH CAROLINA	68,420
LOUISIANA	52,759
INDIANA	47,488
GEORGIA	42,061
ALABAMA	41,222
MINNESOTA	40,888
PENNSYLVANIA	36,752
CONNECTICUT	35,835
WISCONSIN	34,423
NEW JERSEY	33,273
ILLINOIS	33,160
MASSACHUSETTS	32,526
IOWA	32,170
HAWAII	30,559
MARYLAND	29,797
MISSOURI	29,628
KENTUCKY	28,769
OREGON	28,520
ARKANSAS	25,721
ARIZONA	25,169
TENNESSEE	24,199
NEW MEXICO	22,006
UTAH	20,693
WEST VIRGINIA	19,634
OKLAHOMA	18,023
VIRGINIA	17,926
MISSISSIPPI	15,524
IDAHO	12,713
COLORADO	9,387
NEVADA	9,140
RHODE ISLAND	8,015
KANSAS	7,797
NEBRASKA	6,387
MAINE	6,296
MONTANA	5,517
VERMONT	5,420
NEW HAMPSHIRE	5,195
ALASKA	4,822
SOUTH DAKOTA	4,685
WYOMING	3,326
NORTH DAKOTA	3,166
DELAWARE	2,288
WASHINGTON	2,000
U.S. TOTAL	3,500,000

Source: U.S. Department of Education

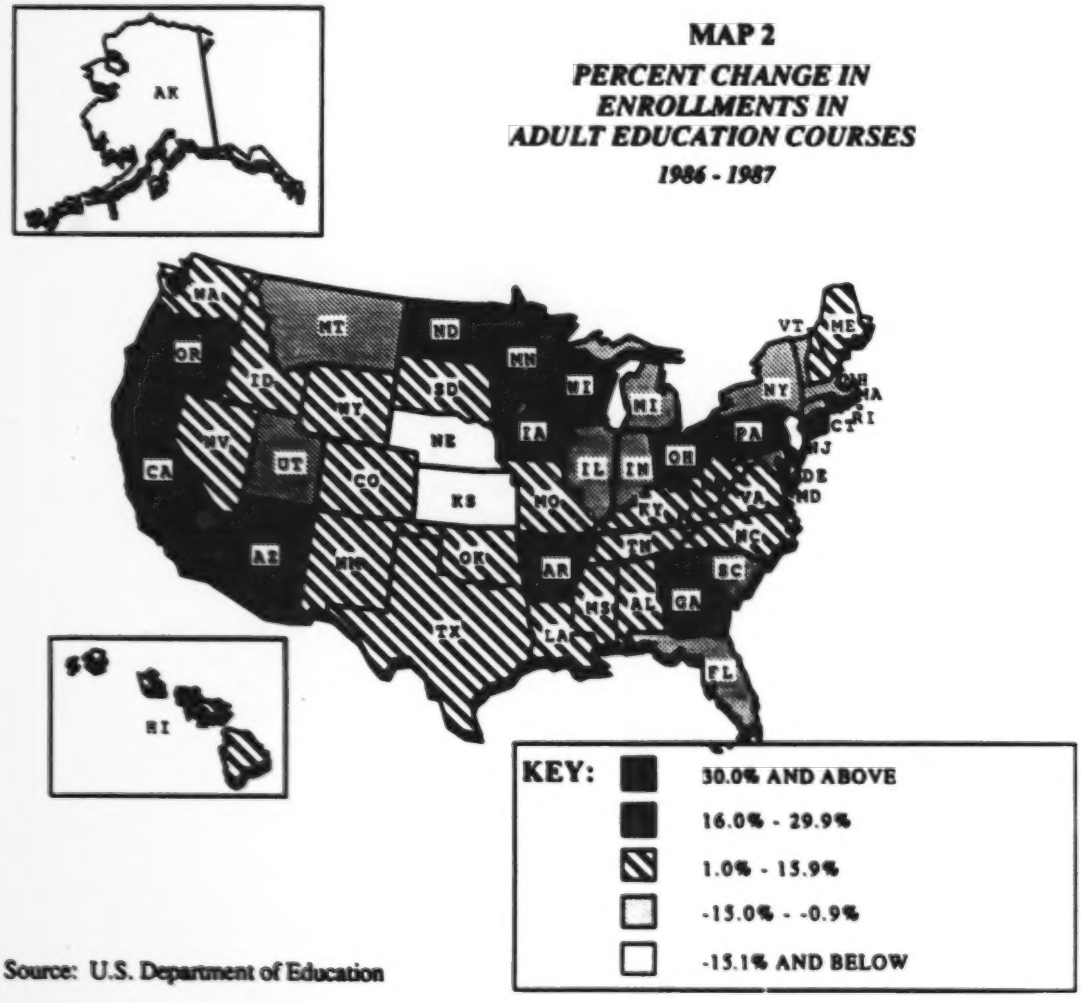
As the table indicates, California, Florida, Michigan, Texas, New York and North Carolina account for nearly two-thirds of national enrollment in federally supported adult education programs. Many states with large literacy problems have low enrollments in these programs, primarily as a result of low state investments in literacy efforts. Recent attention to the problem has caused some states to increase their enrollments substantially and budget figures for FY 1988 indicate that even more people will be enrolled next year. Map 2 shows percentage increases in enrollments in adult education programs from 1986 -1987.

It is important to remember that these figures include only enrollments in adult education programs related to the federal adult education legislation. Other programs serve literacy needs. Volunteers reach between 100,000 and 200,000 people each year; job training

MAP 2

PERCENT CHANGE IN ENROLLMENTS IN ADULT EDUCATION COURSES

1986 - 1987



Source: U.S. Department of Education

and welfare programs reach others. These figures do illustrate, however, the wide range of effort being exerted in the states in dealing with the problem of adult literacy.

THINKING ABOUT THE STATE ROLE

One way of examining the appropriate role for state government in building a new system of literacy services is to determine the jobs that need to be accomplished so that millions of adults can receive basic skills education. A list of those tasks includes:

- Millions of adults need to be motivated to invest considerable time and effort in upgrading their skills. Adults who have failed to gain those skills through the public school system may be difficult to motivate a second time. A crucial task for federal, state and local leaders will be to motivate adults to seek additional skills.
- Strategic planning and policy development must take place and efforts at the state and local level must be coordinated for maximum effectiveness. The current fragmented and inefficient system of basic skills provision must be redesigned by state policymakers. They must work to coordinate existing services and expand public and private efforts to provide basic skills.
- Given the size and extent of the literacy problem, substantial new resources must be allocated to delivery systems for imparting basic skills. These resources will have to be targeted to certain groups of adults. Key decisions about target groups and resource allocations will have to be made.
- Thousands of new literacy enhancement programs must be created. The current system of literacy provision will have to be expanded and new approaches to delivering literacy services will have to be tried and refined.
- Thousands of existing programs will have to be improved and made more effective in delivering literacy services. Current literacy programs provide too little learning for too short a time to make a significant difference for most adults.
- Literacy providers will have to be trained and a new professional cadre of adult basic skills educators will have to be created. Most providers of basic skills education are part-time and few are professionals. Programs now provide little training and guidance to basic skills instructors. A new profession of basic skills providers must be created.
- The current system of literacy provision will have to be encouraged to adopt new technologies and state-of-the-art approaches to delivering services to widely divergent populations of adults who need basic skills. Application of technology holds promise for

improving the provision of basic skills, especially in the workplace. Programs will have to be upgraded to use state-of-the-art methods for teaching basic skills as well.

• Programs will have to be evaluated and made more cost-effective. Performance measurement and performance-based funding of programs must be developed. As the new system is developed, continuous evaluation and re-evaluation of techniques for providing basic skills will be needed.

States have traditionally had the primary responsibility for delivering educational services to the public through diverse systems of elementary and secondary education, community colleges, higher education institutions, job training systems and other educational delivery systems. Until recently, however, the delivery of literacy services has been a low priority for most states. Adult basic education programs have been buried deep within departments of education, often the step-children of vocational education or other elementary and secondary education programs. Volunteer tutoring programs have expanded in recent years, but these are not well connected to the policy-making process in the states. State welfare officials, job training officials and corrections officials have all recognized the need for basic skills delivery, but in each case literacy efforts are only a small part of otherwise large enterprises in the states.

Each of these tasks will require years of effort and substantial resources to accomplish. The magnitude of the literacy problem in America is such that an entire infrastructure of educational services to adults must be built nearly from scratch. To build a new system of basic skills provision, states will have to assume a major role in national policy on upgrading basic skills and enhancing literacy.

STATES AS THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT TO SPEARHEAD LITERACY EFFORTS

While federal leadership and local efforts will be required to take on the massive task of enhancing the literacy of adults in America, states are the appropriate level of government to manage the tasks involved in building a new literacy infrastructure. There are several reasons why states should take the primary responsibility for enhancing adult literacy:

States Have the Traditional Responsibility for Managing Educational Enterprises.

Historically, the federal commitment to education has been dwarfed by the commitment at the state level. Recent education reforms have emanated from the state level, where new commitments to improving elementary and secondary and higher education have been

made. The federal role has been one of redistributing some resources for disadvantaged students, providing research and development and tracking educational performance. While the federal government has provided limited funds for adult basic education, it has delegated the design of programs in this arena to the states.

States Are in a Position to Stimulate Creativity in Service Delivery While Setting Performance Standards for Local Programs.

The challenge of enhancing basic skills for diverse groups of adults will require a multitude of different strategies and program approaches. The current state of the art in providing literacy services is still very fluid. New technologies, increasing emphasis on contextual learning, specialized programs such as workplace literacy efforts, and better information about how adults learn are being developed. Local programs will require technical assistance and support as they expand to serve thousands of new enrollees. State government has long played a "brokering" role between local programs and nationally known approaches to service delivery. As more is known about how best to improve the literacy skills of adults, states can guide local providers in better ways to deliver literacy services. At the same time, states can highlight promising approaches to literacy enhancement within their borders, sharing the information with other providers and states.

States Now Manage Most Federal Programs That Can Be Utilized to Expand the Resources Available for Various Target Groups of Adults.

Literacy enhancement is an important precondition to meeting the goals of several other national programs. Welfare reform, for example, seeks to move single-parents into jobs by providing education, child care, transportation and other services. These educational services will nearly always involve basic skills training. Job training programs, as well, increasingly require clients to receive basic education as a precondition for higher level job skills training. As the labor market tightens, job trainers are finding that more and more of their students lack basic skills. Similarly, providers of social services and early childhood development programs have concluded that adding basic skills education to the mix of services offered low-income families will have an important bearing on the effectiveness of programs designed to encourage more stable families and economic independence. Fluency in English as a second language is a necessity for the full participation in American life of millions of recent immigrants.

States are currently the program managers or at least policy coordinators for the major job training, social service and welfare programs sponsored by the federal government

If these programs are to be directed toward enhancing literacy, state officials will have to make changes in the ways funds are now allocated at the state and local levels.

States Have the Flexibility to Develop a Mix of Programs for Their Unique Target Groups of Adults Requiring Literacy Enhancement.

Efforts to enhance literacy nationwide will not and should not have a single focus. In some states, such as Texas, California and Illinois, for example, the primary target groups will probably be recent immigrants. In states such as Mississippi, South Carolina or Louisiana, efforts will probably be directed toward low-income families, many of them rural. New York and other states with large central cities may target efforts toward the urban poor, especially single-parents.

Since educating adults has proved to be most effective when programs are designed to meet the goals of individual adult learners and teach skills in the context of the workplace or the community, programs will have to be tailored to the circumstances of adults in each of the differing target groups. In addition, choices must be made concerning the skill levels that are necessary for each group of adults to achieve. States are the logical level to target literacy enhancement services to particular groups and to devise strategies for meeting the unique needs of each group.

States Have Developed Substantial Expertise in Working with the Employer Community for Economic Development and Job Training.

Much of the improvement in basic skills will be done for the workplace. Employers are recognizing the need to upgrade the skills of their labor force in order to increase productivity and competitiveness. Forging partnerships with large industries and small businesses alike will be necessary to success in improving the literacy skills of large numbers of workers. States have considerable experience in customizing training and other programs for local businesses. State officials can build upon the expertise developed in economic development and job training programs in cooperation with the private sector.

States have also developed relationships with the business community in other fields of endeavor. State governments, for example, have created small business assistance programs, export promotional activities and a variety of initiatives to work with new enterprises and mature industries. States regulate many facets of economic activity. Using the relationships built up over many years with the private sector, states can enlist firms in partnerships to address the issue of worker literacy improvement.

States Can Provide an Institutional Base for Upgrading the Skills of and Professionalizing the Staff of Adult Literacy Providers.

One of the most important tasks in a national effort to enhance the literacy of adults will be the creation of a professional cadre of persons whose expertise is in enhancing the literacy skills of adults. The process of creating a new profession will have to be managed with care, if the adult literacy field is to avoid the pitfalls of stifling creativity and unnecessarily restricting entry into the field.

Historically, states set standards and promoted professional education through state regulatory agencies and through higher education institutions for a variety of professions. In creating a profession of adult educators, the states will once again set the ground rules. Just as they do for other professions, states will also have to provide the resources for the training of the fledgling profession of adult educators.

States Can Find the Resources to Allocate to Literacy Enhancement.

The combined effect of tax reductions and high federal deficits means that federal resources will be constrained for the foreseeable future. Local governments are unable to contribute a large influx of resources to deal with a problem that spills over local boundaries. The states are the only governmental entities whose revenue growth and relatively healthy fiscal situations will allow substantial new funds to be budgeted for literacy enhancement. Several states have made major financial commitments to adult basic education, and signs are that other states also are increasing allocations in this area, although in more modest amounts. While federal funding will be necessary from a variety of sources, state resources will be necessary to meet the challenge of literacy. Governors and legislators understand the linkage between economic competitiveness and literacy. To the extent that literacy advocacy groups can strengthen this connection in the public mind, it is likely that substantial new state funding can be allocated to literacy.

RECENT HISTORY OF STATE INVOLVEMENT IN ADULT LITERACY POLICY

If states are to carry the primary burden of a national effort to enhance the basic skills of adults, state officials will have to take dramatic steps to change the way adult education systems currently operate. Some states are well on their way to making fundamental changes in priorities and operating procedures for adult literacy. Others have far to go.

The interest of governors and legislators in adult literacy has not resulted solely from national attention focused on the issue by federal leaders and the national media. Even

before the issue gained national prominence, many governors and other state leaders had concluded that adult literacy policy was the next step in an evolution of economic development and education reform initiatives begun in the early 1980s. For several years, state leaders have placed economic development and education at the top of their priority lists for a variety of social, economic and political reasons.

As state policymakers began to examine their economies closely in order to develop strategic economic development plans, they realized that one of the most important elements in economic development is the skill level of the state's labor force. Looking closely at their adult labor forces, they were dismayed to discover the very low skill levels of their workers. Business leaders had been complaining of the lack of literacy skills among workers for a long time, but state officials had primarily relied upon upgrading vocational programs and improving resources for the public schools as potential answers to these problems.

International competition intensified, forcing major restructuring in state economies. State policymakers were once again reminded that the skill levels of adults were abysmally low. Unemployed textile workers in the south and unemployed steel workers in the north shared a common circumstance: many of them could not read, write, compute or communicate well enough to get a decent job. Simultaneously, state policymakers began to explore ways of reducing welfare dependency and solving severe correctional problems, both of which were draining state budgets. As they looked at the characteristics of these populations, they noticed a similar pattern. The literacy skills of these populations precluded their participation in the changing labor force. Unless these adults could be induced to improve their literacy skills, the state would face the prospect of years of growing welfare, health care and corrections costs. In addition, the influx of immigrants and immigration law changes alerted state policymakers to the need for millions of new Americans to obtain basic literacy skills. In short, state policymakers who were searching for ways to improve their economies and their state fiscal positions kept running up against the lack of basic skills in the adult labor force as a major barrier to economic progress.

At first, most state policymakers focused efforts and attention on the elementary and secondary education system as a long-term answer to the basic skills problem. After a few years, however, they began to realize that no matter how good the schools became, most adults in their states had already left school. School reform was a very long term answer. As dropout rates continued to stay high, state leaders also realized providing skills to the adult population would be necessary for many years if states were to compete economically and maintain the standard of living of average citizens.

Adult literacy and basic skills provision entered the mainstream of state policymaking. In 1985, for example, Southern state and local leaders came together to develop the report of the Commission on the Future of the South. Chaired by former Governor William Winter and supported by Governor Bill Clinton, chair of the Southern Growth Policies Board, the report entitled "Halfway Home, A Long Way To Go" highlighted adult literacy as the most severe problem facing the South. In 1986, the National Governors' Association highlighted adult basic skills in a report entitled "Bringing Down the Barriers."

Governors throughout the country announced task forces and study groups, coalitions and coordinating staffs, to address the issue of adult literacy. In Michigan, for example, Governor Blanchard's strategic plan for reviving the Michigan economy identified the low skill level of the workforce as a key barrier to the renewal of that state's economy. The Michigan Adult Literacy Task Force was created in 1986 to address this portion of the state's strategic economic plan.

By 1988, thirty-eight governors had focused state attention on the need for enhanced literacy skills for adults through efforts ranging from state task forces to study the problem to expanded programs. Many of these efforts have involved not only state officials but also representatives of businesses, volunteer organizations, school systems and other institutions concerned with the issue of adult literacy. Most of the task forces or coalitions have combined advocacy, study of the current system and outreach to adults. They have sought to coordinate state programs, while submitting to the governor long-range plans for the overhaul of efforts to enhance basic skills. Much of their work has involved discussion of targeting resources to those adults who need help the most. In most states, literacy policy has been focused on accomplishing other priorities: economic competitiveness, education reform, meeting labor shortages, correctional rehabilitation or welfare reform, for example. A sampling of activities in a variety of states illustrates the diversity of approaches being taken by state policymakers in addressing the issue of literacy.

Arkansas: In Arkansas, for example, Governor Bill Clinton's approach has been to focus on upgrading the skills of Arkansas' large low-income population. To address the issue of basic skills, Governor Clinton appointed a blue-ribbon Commission on Adult Literacy. The Commission consisted of prominent educators, legislators, literacy advocates and was chaired by a leading Arkansas utility executive. In August, 1988, the Commission reported to the Governor, proposing the AAPLE plan, the Arkansas Action Plan for Literacy Enhancement, which formulated the following goals:

• By 1992-93 to increase from approximately 29,000 to 100,000 the number of adult learners enrolled in pursuing at least one higher functional level of literacy.

• Develop achievement objectives for those enrolled in literacy enhancement programs and implement a tracking mechanism to measure achievement.

• Quadruple the involvement of the private sector through donations of money, manpower, facilities and through a significant increase in workplace literacy programs.

• Maximize the effectiveness of the public sector delivery and develop a strong coordination of public and private activities in the statewide literacy effort.

Within the context of these four goals, the Commission proposed a specific set of target groups for special attention. The Arkansas policymakers are placing emphasis on a strategy of reducing welfare dependency through literacy. Public assistance recipients receiving literacy services will increase ten-fold, while employed persons will double. An especially interesting target group for the AAPLE plan is adult offenders who are not sent to prison but are under correctional or court supervision. The plan envisions a nearly ten-fold increase in services to this group of adults.

The Arkansas strategy involving public assistance recipients, recipients of unemployment insurance and adults in the criminal justice system involves both negative and positive incentives. According to the recommendations of the Commission, by July 1, 1989 all recipients of welfare, unemployment benefits and those subject to parole, probation or alternative sentences would be required to undergo a screening process to assess their levels of basic skills. By 1991, all recipients judged to be "at risk" of dependency because of low skills would be required to enroll in a literacy training program. Support services, such as counseling, day care and transportation, would be made available to those seeking additional skills.

The plan calls for a quadrupling of private sector resources through an annual statewide "Literacy Support Drive" as well as through continuing contributions from businesses, especially contributions involving space in the workplace and time off for employees to seek literacy enhancements. Noting that only 17 percent of Arkansas businesses indicated in a survey a willingness to allocate funds to literacy in the workplace, the plan calls for state incentives, including possibly tax incentives, for businesses to participate in literacy programs.

In response to the Governor's Commission report, Governor Clinton has moved to implement several aspects of the plan. His recently submitted budget called for about $8

million in additional funds for adult education, targeted to dependent populations and workplace literacy efforts. Other structural reforms include changes within the Department of Education to upgrade the status of literacy efforts and a continuing advisory role for the task force.

Massachusetts: In Massachusetts, state efforts have emphasized taking advantage of the state's booming economy and tight labor market to focus efforts on upgrading the skills of the current labor force and welfare recipients. Governor Dukakis originally envisioned the creation of a Massachusetts Literacy Corp, a volunteer effort organized by the state to tutor adults in literacy skills. After a year of planning and implementation, the original idea blossomed into the Massachusetts Literacy Campaign, a multi-year effort to coordinate state programs to enhance literacy as well as strengthen the voluntary effort. Massachusetts officials determined that volunteer programs alone could not do the job of upgrading basic skills.

The MLC has prepared a plan for literacy enhancement that focuses on expanding several current programs to include literacy services as well as improving volunteer outreach activities and public awareness. A large student recruitment campaign through the media has begun. Working through the Massachusetts Jobs Council, a coordinating body recently established by the Legislature, the Literacy Campaign plans new literacy services in the workplace, through community groups and through the adult education programs of the state. A special feature of the campaign is to work with mature industries through the Industrial Services Program, a state initiative to help industries that might otherwise produce dislocated workers. The Literacy Campaign has also worked with labor unions to help support workplace literacy efforts. In addition to these activities on behalf of currently employed people, the Literacy Campaign has secured agreement with job training program managers to sponsor literacy programs for welfare recipients as a prelude to entry into Massachusetts' welfare reform program known as "ET".

With a severe labor shortage and a state budget crisis, Massachusetts' approach to literacy enhancement has not been to argue for large infusions of new resources, but rather to use existing programs for job training, welfare, education and employment services to divert resources to literacy enhancement. Since many of the people once served by job training programs have jobs in the booming economy, job training funds have been liberated to provide services to people whose basic skills are so deficient that they cannot even be trained

for work. Similarly, funds once used to serve dislocated workers are being used to enhance literacy in order to prevent dislocation.

Michigan: Michigan is second only to California in the amount of state funds allocated to enhancing adult literacy through adult education programs. Last year the state appropriated over $81 million to expand adult education programs. This commitment resulted from a two-year gubernatorial effort spearheaded by the Michigan Adult Literacy Task Force. This task force grew out or recommendations in the Michigan Strategic Plan, a set of initiatives designed to revitalize the Michigan economy under the leadership of Governor James Blanchard. In the strategic economic plan, the state opted for an economic development strategy that emphasized the future of "smart manufacturing"— manufacturing enterprises that are smaller, more competitive and use higher technology than the traditional "RustBelt" industries. A corollary to helping develop "smart manufacturing" was that workers had to be better trained to compete. Michigan's policymakers examined their labor force and discovered that many current workers had progressed through 10th grade or so and had very basic skills, but that they needed extra help in order to be able to communicate more effectively, solve problems and work in teams.

As a result, the emphasis in Michigan is on workplace literacy efforts aimed at higher level skills. Additional funds were appropriated through the adult education system for literacy and most of the money seems to be flowing to the community college system. In addition, Governor Blanchard has announced that a whole variety of education-related services will be available to all citizens through the Michigan Opportunity Card — a card similar to a credit card that will allow citizens to purchase literacy enhancement and other services throughout the state.

Minnesota: In Minnesota, Governor Rudy Perpich appointed a Task Force on Adult Literacy in 1984 to assess the literacy problem and make recommendations. The Task Force recommended a five-year campaign to increase the number of adults served by literacy programs and "ultimately to achieve the highest level of literacy in the nation." In 1985 the Governor created the Minnesota Adult Reading Campaign, a coalition of literacy providers, advocates and community leaders. In 1986, the missions of the campaign were revised and the organization was renamed the Minnesota Adult Literacy Campaign (MALC.)

The MALC prepared a "Five-Year Plan to Address Functional Illiteracy in Minnesota. " The plan estimated that over 600,000 Minnesotans lacked adequate literacy skills and that only about 32,000 were receiving literacy services. The plan enunciated the following goals:

- Establish adult literacy as a priority in the state of Minnesota,
- Expand capacity, quality and effectiveness of literacy programs to provide educational services to adult learners,
- Develop opportunities for all segments of the Minnesota community to participate in the Campaign and the literacy effort in the state,
- Increase funding for existing literacy programs,
- Improve the accessibility of literacy programs to potential participants,
- Develop a long-term strategy, including structure and plans, to reach 200,000 adult learners per year with literacy services by 1991, and
- Encourage innovation in the delivery of adult literacy services through the present provider system and, as needed, through the development and funding of new programs.

Since 1986, the MALC has worked not only with the provider community but also with program managers and other state officials to increase the awareness of the literacy issue, recruit students, increase legislative appropriations for literacy services and coordinate programs. In addition, the literacy campaign in Minnesota has designed a new workplace literacy initiative and has taken steps to help local literacy providers evaluate and assess the effectiveness of their programs.

MALC has operated general outreach media programs, a specialized student learner recruitment program and has worked to coordinate services from a variety of state and local agencies. Significantly, MALC has helped build a coalition of support for new resources for adult literacy provision. Legislative appropriations for adult basic continuing education increased from $1.8 million in FY 1987 to $4.2 million in FY 1989. New state funding amounting to $200,000 was obtained to assist nonprofit organizations in providing literacy services and other state funds were appropriated for a television-based GED program.

Virginia: In Virginia, the Governor has taken a two-fold approach to the development of adult literacy services. After several years of planning and advocacy led by First Lady Jeannie Baliles, the administration proposed and the legislature endorsed the creation of a free-standing Office of Adult Literacy in state government to coordinate the expansion of literacy services. Under the plan, twelve local service districts have been created, coordinated by boards combining private sector interests and state agencies with responsibilities for literacy services. Together with the office of literacy, these service boards will coordinate the provision of expanded literacy services based on local needs and state priorities. A crucial part of Virginia's effort is the commitment of the education department to coordinate programs with the local service district priorities.

The state also helped create a private Virginia Literacy Foundation to support efforts by volunteer groups and to help create public-private cooperative programs. An important feature of the foundation is that it will attempt to provide support services rather than fund programs directly. To that end, $3 million has been raised to endow the foundation, which will give start-up grants to local groups and sponsor in-service and pre-service training for literacy instructors and administrators. The foundation also has begun to attract substantial private funding, including corporate gifts. Working with the private sector, the foundation officials hope to be able to engender increasing interest in workplace literacy and other private sector initiatives over the next few years.

Virginia hopes to double its literacy services within the next two years. State efforts will be targeted to unemployed adults and heads of households in single-parent families. The Legislature has appropriated over $4 million in new funds for literacy programs over the next biennium, a significant increase from prior years. Literacy advocates believe that state appropriations can be increased further during the next budget cycle.

The Virginia approach combined strong state action, local planning, and reliance on the private sector for support of literacy efforts, especially of workforce literacy projects. If the Virginia Literacy Foundation is a success, a number of other states will be looking closely at the model, since it combines elements of strong state leadership with private sector support for literacy efforts related to economic development.

IMPLEMENTING A STRONG STATE ROLE

As the brief descriptions of actions in several states indicate, state governments are taking leadership in addressing the issue of adult literacy. In general, they have moved from public awareness campaigns and using volunteers to serious consideration of setting goals, involving the private sector, reorganizing state government to improve service delivery and allocating additional state resources to literacy efforts. Governors have organized coalitions and campaigns; they have centralized coordinating groups in their own offices, and they have begun to expand service delivery systems.

Governors and legislatures, however, are only just beginning to confront several crucial issues that must be addressed before the states can claim that they are truly leading the nation toward literacy enhancement.

These issues encompass the agenda for the future of state government in implementing a national policy to enhance adult literacy:

• How should the institutional leadership, organization and control necessary for a sustained effort for adult literacy enhancement be identified and developed?

• How can states best target resources to particular groups of adults who need to improve basic skills?

• How can states move to improve the quality of existing programs and improve retention rates, the speed of learning and the portability of basic skills?

• How can states provide incentives for student or employers to participate successfully in basic skills development activities? How can other mechanisms besides increasing the supply of services be used to address the problem?

• How can productivity and performance measurement be injected into a system of shared service provision?

• How can the states induce literacy providers to employ new technologies and the application of research and development to techniques of imparting basic skills to adults?

• How can states create a more professional corp of teachers and administrators of adult literacy programs?

• How can more resources be generated at the state and local levels to address the problem?

How Should the Institutional Leadership, Organization and Control Necessary for a Sustained Effort for Adult Literacy Enhancement be Identified and Developed?

To date, most of the policy development concerning improving basic skills in the states has been carried out by task forces, commissions, coalitions or small staffs in the governors' offices. These are common responses by governors to emerging issues such as adult literacy. In the short run, it is appropriate for governors to keep adult literacy policy development and coordination of services closely associated with the governor's office. In the longer run, however, state leadership must be institutionalized for a sustained effort to be mounted.

Governors and legislatures will have to provide a locus for coordination, funding, program improvement, training and other activities to enhance the current system of literacy provision. Governors will also have to develop ways of controlling funding, program and policy decisions heretofore left to other institutional entities such as the elementary and secondary education system and the employment and training system. To the extent that federal barriers exist to assumption of this control, they should be removed. Assuring coordination of funding and policymaking will require strategic planning in the governor's

office. At least for the next few years, leadership and coordination of state efforts will emanate from the governor's policy and planning function, from the governor's budget, and from a variety of coordinative mechanisms established in or near the governor's office.

At the same time, a reorientation of existing policies and programs will have to be carried out. Adult basic education programs will have to be targeted more carefully, even while they are being expanded. Job training and social services programs will have to be directed toward provision of literacy services. Relationships with the private sector will have to be improved. State and local providers of literacy services will have to be induced to work with employers to develop and implement workplace literacy programs. A major effort will have to be undertaken to improve the retention rates of programs and to guide curriculum toward portable skills development. States will have to mount a major coordinated effort to build a system of literacy provision that is driven by state policies and resources but is carried out at the local level.

Even as planning and resource allocation are carried out at a central level in state government, policymakers should be preparing the groundwork for institutionalizing the activity of adult literacy enhancement. The history of gubernatorial initiatives based in a central office suggests that unless a strong institutional base is built within state government and on behalf of major constituencies in the state, these efforts can falter and disappear. Witness, for example, the flurry of activities in the area of energy in the 1970s. In many states, governors' energy offices were created to handle the various crises brought on by the oil embargoes, gas lines, pleas for conservation and other energy-related events. In states where gubernatorial energy offices were primarily coordinating mechanisms devoted to crisis management, when the crisis abated, so did state efforts. In states where the energy issue was perceived early by the governor and legislature as one central to the long term economic future of the state, institutional bases were developed in state government, local governments and in the private sector to support energy policy in the future. When the time came for the governor to move on to another issue, the energy offices were folded into state departments or new state departments were created to continue the work. For other special initiatives of the 1970s, such as a number of governors' offices on women's issues, the strong institutional locus of activity was never created, and many of these efforts have languished in state government.

Candidates for assuming major responsibility for adult literacy include the economic development system, the community college system, the system of elementary and secon-

dary education or new entities created for the purpose of pursuing the basic skills agenda. In determining the most appropriate locus for the organization and implementation of long-term policies to enhance basic skills, state leaders will face a variety of institutional obstacles, most of which relate to the fact that literacy is likely to be a derivative goal for any major institutional system that adopts the literacy initiative.

Economic development. Within state government, activities relating to economic development have recently been strengthened. Formerly devoted primarily to attracting outside industries, managing tourism promotions and sometimes assisting small businesses, economic development agencies are now becoming much more involved with upgrading the skills of the labor force. State officials have recognized the strong linkage between education and job training and the ability of firms to compete in an international marketplace. In turn, providers of job training services have stressed the need for basic skills as a precondition to success in improving the skills and productivity of workers.

This linkage may make a persuasive case for states to lodge the major institutional responsibility with the economic development or labor agency whose major goals include upgrading the skills of the current or potential labor force. Most state initiatives to improve basic skills of adults have been justified on economic development grounds or in order to reduce economic dependency. Tying the institutional locus of basic skills development to the development of a more productive labor force will also help states to broaden programs to include currently employed persons.

If state leaders choose this institutional base for literacy, they will be fighting the traditional definition of literacy as primarily an educational service available to all, regardless of their connection to the labor force or the economy. They will also face the necessity of moving responsibility for adult basic education programs out from under large and entrenched education bureaucracies, many of which are led by independently elected or appointed education officials.

Community colleges. A second candidate for taking on the long term responsibility for managing a major program of basic skills provision is the community or junior college system. Developed in many states first as vocational and technical schools, these postsecondary educational institutions have built extensive 2-year liberal arts and science programs as well as 2-year technical curricula. Community colleges are the sites for many adult basic education classes right now, and many community colleges have gone into the business of customized job training under contract with various state and local agencies. Community

colleges in many states have a long tradition of dealing with the remedial education needs of adults. In states such as North Carolina, where a community college exists within 50 miles of every resident, the political and public entrepreneurial spirit of the community college system has led to a substantial involvement in the issue of adult literacy. In other states, where the community college tradition is not strong, governors and legislatures may prefer to turn to other systems for supporting the adult literacy initiatives needed in the states.

In many states, the political and community strength of the community colleges may also be a detriment to central coordination of literacy efforts. Community colleges tend to go their own way, and are very resistant to gubernatorial or legislative direction. Like other institutions of higher learning, their goals primarily involve educating young people in higher level skills, especially technical skills. Literacy efforts may be attractive to community college leaders as long as the literacy issue is perceived as important to other high priorities, especially economic development. If public support for literacy efforts wanes, however, community colleges may well move swiftly on to other areas of education, especially the "sexier" issues of scientific and technical education.

In addition, the tradition of education within many though not all community colleges is classroom education. Most adult education programs now operated by community colleges are delivered to undifferentiated groups of adults in a classroom setting. Although community colleges have some experience in functional competency-based instruction, particularly in vocational programs, the tendency of community college administrators will be to expand traditional classroom-based literacy programs. If responsibility for literacy enhancement is lodged primarily in the community college system, state program managers will have to make sure that community colleges are given incentives to establish community-based and workplace-based programs in addition to programs at the community colleges themselves. The approaches taken by community colleges in, for example, Maricopa County, Miami Dade and some North Carolina programs should be examined as potentially valuable departures from the more traditional approaches of community colleges.

Education. A third option for governors and legislators seeking a long-term institutional home for adult literacy programs is the system now responsible for most publicly funded adult literacy programs — the elementary and secondary education system. Driven by the availability of federal adult education funds, states have lodged in their education bureaucracies the responsibility for programs to improve adult basic skills. The adult education programs, which constitute the most substantial state investments in literacy, are largely

relegated to lower-levels of state education bureaucracies and, until recently, have been a low priority for education officials.

Although the path of least resistance for governors and legislatures may be to upgrade the current adult education organizations within state education bureaucracies as a way to expand literacy programs in the short term, state officials should resist this course. The time has come for governors and legislators to recognize the overwhelming deficiencies of leaving the major responsibility for upgrading the basic skills of the labor force with the state education bureaucracy.

State leaders should give much more thought to the possible long-term negative consequences of continuing to rely on the elementary and secondary education system as the institutional base for state basic skills efforts. At least three reasons exist for removing the nucleus of state adult basic skills efforts from current education governance systems in the states:

First, it is unlikely that leaders in the elementary and secondary education system will ever be able to make adult basic skills the highest or even a very high priority. State education leaders will continue to view improving elementary and secondary schools as their top priority for many years to come. The education reform agenda is unfinished and will probably remain unfinished for the foreseeable future. Many state education leaders believe, rightly, that their greatest contribution to adult literacy would be to stop producing dropouts and graduates without basic skills. New initiatives and pressures to upgrade vocational education at the secondary and postsecondary levels will probably become the second priority for state education officials. At best, adult literacy advocates could expect that their issue would become third on the agenda for state elementary and secondary education officials.

Second, most state education officials are not part of the governor's executive span of control. Seventeen are independently elected officials. Twelve are appointed by governors and all others are appointed by boards who are somewhat or totally independent of the governor's control. This independence may have important benefits to elementary and secondary education policy, but for adult literacy efforts the lack of coordination with job training, welfare, social services and other executive branch programs could be fatal in the long run. While community colleges and other postsecondary systems are equally independent, the combination of independence of elementary and secondary education officials and their necessarily low priority on adult literacy could make building a new system of adult literacy through the education system all but impossible.

Third, the tradition of ABE programs is to provide classroom-based adult education to all adults who do not possess a high school diploma. When states try to target resources to welfare recipients, adults in the criminal justice system, or on the job, adult education programs may not be able to accommodate the changes necessary to build the new system. In particular, the credentialing and teaching methods of elementary and secondary education are not appropriate to the job of enhancing literacy of most adults. Adult basic education programs will always be an important part of the mix of programs necessary to enhance literacy in any state. Whether adult education programs can expand the basic skills system and target its services is problematical.

New Institutions

Many leaders among state policymakers on basic skills improvement believe that in the long run, wholly new institutions must be created at the state level to manage the process of improving basic skills for adults. This fourth option in seeking a long-term institutional base for literacy enhancement efforts is to create new departments or institutional entities. Although governors and legislatures are usually hesitant about creating new bureaucracies, basic skills advocates argue that the magnitude of the problem precludes tacking the responsibility for literacy enhancement onto the priorities of other major systems. Moreover, since elements of many other major systems will have to be enlisted in the effort to improve basic skills, no single existing state government entity is equipped to apply the performance and other standards needed to all systems. It may be appropriate, for example, to contract with community colleges for the provision of basic skills to working adults, but it may not be appropriate for the community college system to execute and monitor those contracts with its own constituents.

New organizational entities could be created by combining the functions of adult education and job training into free-standing systems dedicated primarily to upgrading the skills of the labor force. In Kentucky, for example, the Governor proposed just such a new Department of Adult Learning, but the Legislature has yet to approve that proposal. In that state, it should be noted, the proposal was to place the department under the aegis of a large umbrella agency devoted to economic and community development. In other states, such as South Carolina, post-secondary vocational education has been pulled out of agencies responsible for elementary and secondary education.

As basic skills and job training systems grow, it may be more commonplace for state policymakers to consider separate agencies or institutions devoted to adult basic skills devel-

opment. Like most other decisions in building a new system of basic skills services, the question of the institutional base for literacy will have to be played out on a state-by-state basis. In some states, the community college system will be the most logical home for an expanded literacy program.

In many states, new centers of effort will be built around the economic development and job training activities of state government. For the moment, most of the planning and resource allocation will take place somewhere close to the governor. In the long run, state leaders need to decide most appropriate institutional home for literacy in the 1990s. When they do so, they will no longer be willing to entrust the governance of basic skills enhancement programs to elementary and secondary education agencies. Many will create independent agencies to take on the job of upgrading the skills of the labor force or they will utilize existing economic development agencies as the central institutional focus for basic skills enhancement. In determining the appropriate institutional location, the deciding factors should be the accountability of the institution to the needs of the students, the needs of the labor force and the direction set by the governor.

How Can States Best Target Resources to Address the Issue of Adult Basic Skills?

Resources will not be adequate to meet the needs of all those who require basic education in the near future. Targeting will be necessary. To some degree, federal resources will be targeted through broad categorical federal programs. It is extremely unlikely, nor is it appropriate, for the federal government to give block grants to the states for literacy and allow them to set all the priorities. Most federal funds for literacy services will flow through programs designed to accomplish goals other than merely to impart basic skills. These programs will be aimed at training people for better jobs, getting them off welfare, helping dislocated workers, providing better child care, strengthening troubled families or accomplishing other national goals. In any case, Congress is loathe to provide funds to the states without guidance and direction.

In the early years of growing state concern about literacy, literacy coalitions, state officials and many others perceived the problem as a generalized one — a problem that a hotline and volunteer tutors for anyone wanting to learn to read could fix. The tradition within the education community was that all adults who want to learn should have access to services. Now state officials are targeting resources more carefully and effectively. Within the states, governors and legislatures also see the necessity of targeting limited state resources. States are better able to provide funds for literacy than the federal government and they have substantial incentives to do so.

In the short run, however, states are not likely to provide enough funds to serve all in need. Rudimentary calculations of need show that to provide basic skills to all adults who do not have a high school diploma, for example, would require building a new system roughly as large as the current public higher education system. Given budget constraints at the state level, it is highly unlikely that governors and legislatures will undertake the fiscal commitment to building such a system. Targeting resources to groups of adults will be necessary, and one can expect many states to phase-in increases in resources to build a new system of literacy services.

As the experience in Arkansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Virginia and other states illustrates, targeting is not foreign to gubernatorial policymakers. Targeting resources has not been the tradition in the voluntary tutoring programs, however, nor has the ABE program been allowed by federal law to target services. In some states, changing demand for services has resulted in a form of targeting. In California, for example, the adult education program served about 465,000 people who need ESL services in 1987, while serving only about 103,000 adults who were English-speaking and required basic skills (0-8). This type of targeting does not allow state officials to determine who best to allocate resources, although it does respond, roughly, to changes in demand for services in the communities of a state.

Issues of targeting relate not only to specific groups of adults but also to desired skill levels. Depending on the social and economic circumstances states, the mix of targeted groups and skill levels may be quite different. In a highly industrialized state, for example, state officials may want to target resources not only on employed people but also in programs that lead to higher levels of skill. In another state, officials may target resources to unemployed people with very low skills, seeking to achieve only the most basic levels of reading, writing, computing and communicating for these adults. In a third state, resources may be targeted to adults of all skill levels who are not English-speakers.

The question of targeting also relates to the subsidiary nature of the goal of adult literacy and to the political and fiscal realities in the states themselves. State officials need to take a hard look at the relationship of adult literacy to other goals and the resources devoted to achieving those goals. In Massachusetts, for example, adult literacy and job training policymakers have decided that a major target group for literacy services is currently employed people who may be displaced if their employers cannot remain competitive. This targeting decision flowed from an attempt to help troubled industries in order to prevent

many workers from becoming dislocated. Massachusetts officials believe that by improving skills in the workplace, a great deal of unemployment can be avoided. Working with unions and employers, Massachusetts job training officials are implementing workplace literacy programs through the Industrial Services Program, a program designed to meet many needs for troubled industries. In Mississippi, on the other hand, the issue of literacy relates not so much to retaining jobs as to creating them. The levels of literacy are so low for so many people that policymakers believe that targeting unemployed people with very low skills makes the most sense. The strategy for literacy is to link the issue to education reform and economic development, where policymakers see the need for long-term investments.

At the same time, state policy processes that target resources have tended to focus attention on unemployed people with basic skills deficiencies, rather than on the employed who need help. Indeed, most federal programs do the same. Improving basic skills of millions of currently employed adults has been primarily a rhetorical target rather than a target of new programs or resources at the federal or state levels. In a few states, workplace literacy programs and programs involving employers and unions have been stressed. In most state targeting exercises, however, these types of efforts have taken a second priority to helping welfare recipients, prisoners, long-term unemployed people and other non-workers improve their skills. While it is hard to argue with state policies that target resources to very poor people and people without jobs, federal concerns with the skills of currently working people need to be reflected in the targeting decisions of states as well.

In describing the appropriate state role in national literacy policy, the important point is not that state officials will select differing target groups — both in terms of skills and economic circumstances — but that they must be encouraged to target carefully and relate targeting decisions to national goals. One of these national goals should include a focus on the currently employed as well as those adults who need basic skills to become employed. How to induce state officials to target their own resources as well as additional federal resources on working people who need basic skills improvement is the subject of much of the federal role section of this paper.

<u>How Can States Improve the Quality of Existing Programs, Focusing on Retention Rates, the Speed of Learning and the Portability of Basic Skills?</u>

Judged by retention rates, speed of learning and the few evaluations available of program outcomes, many adult basic skills programs have very limited success. Practitioners in the field attribute this lack of success to insufficient resources, ill-defined program

goals, use of inappropriate instructional materials and techniques, the lack of a professional teaching corp, and low student motivation. Whatever the causes of low program quality, states will have to work to improve adult basic skills program operations and outcomes if the new funds states and the federal government are likely to invest are to be well spent.

While the exact mechanisms for this emphasis on program quality cannot be defined generically, several directions for the states can be specified. As the new system of adult literacy service provision is implemented, governors and legislatures need to make sure that the following characteristics are present in programs, both public and private.

First, adult basic skills programs should be related directly to the context in which the adult is seeking to learn new skills. If a state targets currently employed people to help upgrade their skills, literacy programs should be delivered in the workplace and be related directly to the job or career. If programs are for welfare recipients, the curriculum should be based on achieving minimum job skills and should relate to getting a job. If the target group is mothers with small children, the program should relate the acquisition of basic skills to child care or to getting a job. State officials should avoid putting resources into "generic" classroom-based programs for all target groups. Increasing the contextual basis of adult education should help increase the retention rate for adults as well.

Second, all programs should be aimed at teaching portable skills. By portable skills, practitioners in adult education mean basic skills that are related to job or life experiences but that can be carried over into new situations. The rapidly changing nature of work, home and community life in the United States requires that adult basic education be oriented toward skills that can be used in a variety of situations. Many of these skills have been measured in the adult NAEP and researchers are working on developing curricula to teach them. They include such activities as reading documents, doing two-stage calculations, interpreting columns of figures and other skills which can be related to a variety of tasks, including tasks needed to hold and advance in various jobs.

Third, adult literacy programs must improve retention rates. Current retention rates are abysmally low. Most adults who do take the effort to attempt to upgrade basic skills spend very little time before getting discouraged and dropping out. In some states, up to 30 percent of adult education enrollees drop out of programs before having received 12 hours of instruction. This "revolving door" problem must be solved by the states. Basic skill enhancement programs must increase the learning gains of adult students and to accomplish this task programs will have to be designed so that they retain adults longer than at present. Improv-

ing results will also require shortening the time it takes to acquire new skills and showing adults a more direct "pay off" resulting from their efforts. Promising results come from programs which impart skills which can be transferred to changing life situations, offer instruction in the context of work or family life, tailor programs to meet both the skill levels and social and economic problems of learners, are sensitive to the ethnic and cultural background of the learner, discard traditional teaching styles and tailor instruction to the needs of the learner.

In addition, basic skills enhancement programs must be financed and organized well enough that they can offer adults support services in order to help them remain in the programs. Support services such as help with child care arrangements, transportation or dealing with sick family members can make a difference in the ability of adults to complete literacy training.

Fourth, because much remains to be learned about the most effective ways to teach adults, every program should have built in a system of performance measurement and an evaluation capacity. Programs must be able to track individual progress and program-wide performance. In order for states to build a new system of literacy provision, program managers and policymakers alike need to know what is working for adults and what is not. States will require help from the federal government in defining performance measures. State governments will have to become the leaders in using improved performance measures in order to build incentives for performance into contracting and monitoring systems for local providers of basic skills services.

As states build the system of literacy provision, their officials must develop new mechanisms to ensure that at least these four characteristics of literacy programs are implemented. These mechanisms will include setting standards for programs receiving state funds, exhortation by state officials, developing partnerships with businesses in providing literacy programs in the workplace, and providing resources to volunteer groups and others so that their programs can be improved. In particular, states will have to develop performance-based contracting systems linked to a broad array of service providers serving different types of adults needing basic skills. In a performance-based approach, the governor would set the policy direction, identify the framework of standards or criteria for program operation and stipulate the desired outcome. Any interested organization, firm or individual would be free to compete for resources for service provision. The governor's policy would base resource allocation on performance in accordance with clearly stated objectives related to outcome.

Through performance-based contracting systems, states can monitor the effectiveness of local basic skills programs and private sector-based programs alike.

Because much of the work to improve program quality will necessitate experimentation and demonstrations, states should also provide for program evaluations and for promising demonstrations of new techniques in teaching basic skills. Each of the performance contracting systems in the states should include evaluation mechanisms tied to at least a portion of the payments for educational services. Special demonstration programs could receive extra reimbursement or other rewards for especially innovative or effective results based on new techniques or better use of existing resources.

How Can States Provide Incentives for Student or Employers to Participate Successfully in Basic Skills Development Activities? How Can Other Mechanisms Besides Increasing the Supply of Services Be Used to Address the Problem?

Possibly the most important, and least explored, challenges for the states is motivating both individuals and companies to participate in the quest for improved basic skills. The presumption by most state policymakers has been that if more programs are made available, people and businesses will want to participate. This is an untested assumption. While it is undeniable that large numbers of adults have been willing to at least try out literacy services through the adult education programs, many of these adults have not been retained in programs. In addition, many adults attempting to improve their skills are currently unemployed. It may be more difficult to motivate people who are already working to spend the time and energy to improve their skills.

Large businesses and highly organized industries have recognized that their competitive positions depend on increasing the skills of their workers. Smaller businesses — those that are likely to fuel the future economy — have not yet recognized the link between literacy and their bottom lines. If they have, they do not have the resources to provide literacy programs, or even time off for workers to improve basic skills. With the possible exception of recent immigrants, adults needing basic skills have not been flooding to literacy programs, despite efforts by Project Literacy US and other media efforts across the country. Even when they do enroll, many adults do not find that they can devote the time and energy to improving their skills that their situation demands.

The motivational issue for both adult individuals and private businesses may explain in part why many states have targeted resources to groups that can be motivated directly through state actions. Requirements for prisoners to take literacy classes, for example, have

been made in part because the state can identify a captive audience, solving at least part of the motivation problem through fiat. At least prisons and prisoners can be required to create and attend programs, although these efforts have not been particularly successful in inducing prisoners to improve their skills. Welfare recipients can be required to attend basic skills classes as a condition of receiving the welfare grant, but once again required attendance will not necessarily result in motivation to learn. Adults seem most motivated to improve basic skills when they see the possibility of getting a good job or of improving their ability to be good parents to their children.

Motivating employed adults will be more difficult. Single parents not on welfare have little time to attend adult literacy classes. Child care will be a difficulty, as will transportation. Support services will have to be improved if large numbers of adults, especially employed people, are to spend more time and energy improving basic skills. While workplace literacy programs and other skills programs at the job site will help make these activities more convenient, simply placing traditional literacy programs at work sites will not be enough. Inducing businesses to provide space and, more importantly, time off for workers to attend literacy enhancement programs will be a major challenge. While large businesses may have the resources and incentives to plan and implement major workplace literacy programs, very few small businesses will be able to participate.

States may have to consider financial incentives to adults and businesses to induce them to participate in literacy enhancement efforts. Not all of what needs to be done can be accomplished through the expansion of existing programs or creating new programs. Regulation, tax policies, using vouchers or other forms of grant funds may also be needed to create the motivation for private sector involvement in addressing literacy issues. State government will have to develop these new mechanisms and determine their use in conjunction with traditional literacy programs.

States should experiment with vouchers and stipends for adults in target groups to motivate them to spend their time and energies on improving their skills. These demonstrations could help determine if direct financial incentives can help improve recruitment and retention rates in basic skills programs. States should also link On-the-Job-Training programs within current Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA) programs to basic skills program completion, in effect guaranteeing jobs to unemployed adults as a reward for successful completion of literacy enhancement programs. Under this approach, adults who had recorded substantial increases in skills could be guaranteed placement in jobs. Employers would receive a subsidy through the JTPA program for further training in the workplace.

Small business assistance programs should be expanded to help small, struggling businesses help improve workers' skills. Small businesses may respond to tax breaks or changes in the regulatory environment tied to assisting their employees in improving their skills. Since many small businesses are dependent upon large businesses for markets, it may also be possible to tie small businesses into workplace literacy programs offered by large businesses. Some large businesses, such as auto companies, have invested in workplace literacy programs at the same time that they are requiring productivity and quality increases from their suppliers. States should also experiment with offering incentives to large companies to offer enrollment in literacy programs to employees of supplier businesses.

Even without organizing major demonstrations or experiments, states and local governments could move rapidly to offer incentives to their own employees and to provide workplace basic skills programs to their own workforces. Employees of state and local governments amount to over 10 percent of all workers in the labor force today. Providing even a small part of those workers with access to basic skills enhancement and incentives to take part in improvement programs would be a major contribution of state and local governments.

To date, no state has adopted an incentive system addressing the motivation of adults or businesses to participate in basic skills enhancement efforts. Several states, including Arkansas, Michigan, North Carolina and Kentucky, have considered such proposals. As states enter the next phase of planning for adult literacy initiatives, more incentives for participation in adult literacy enhancement programs should be tried.

<u>How Can Productivity and Performance Measurement Be Injected into a System of Shared Service Provision?</u>

The current system of adult literacy and basic skills service provision is operated by a host of different kinds of providers. Deliverers of adult basic education include volunteer tutors, classroom teachers in community colleges, community-based organizations, school districts, businesses, job training organizations and many others. States need a way of providing funds to these organizations for the delivery of services that will ensure higher quality services. In addition, states must find ways to direct resources to certain groups and to adults with specific skill levels. States need mechanisms to measure the progress of adults in improving their skills.

In a system where providers were all of one type or where there were known relationships among inputs — such as teaching hours or hours in front of a computer — and outputs

— such as skill level increases or the ability to solve new kinds of problems — the state could specify program eligibility standards and be fairly certain that a given level of resources would produce a given level of achievement. Unfortunately, these relationships are largely unknown in the field of teaching adults. As a result, states will probably have to contract with providers of services either in a very open-ended way, or they will have to develop measurement systems and performance standards for literacy providers.

At present, most adult education funds are distributed according to enrollments or the costs of programs and specific classes, without much reliance on what students are actually learning or exactly who those students are. As states invest more money in adult literacy, however, they will have to develop measurement systems and performance contracting systems if they are to track the progress of service delivery and pay providers for performance. This task will not be accomplished easily, for several reasons. First, provider resistance to performance measurement and performance contracting will be substantial. Providers of service quite naturally want to have the largest latitude in service delivery possible. They also argue cogently that many of the factors affecting the performance of adults in improving their skills are out of their control. Second, measuring educational improvement is a difficult art. Performance-based fund allocations depend on accurate and fair measurement of student achievement. To date, standardized tests and other assessment instruments have not been shown to be reliable enough to base funding allocations on them. Finally, states will be trying to increase the supply of literacy services dramatically. State officials may not want to place too many burdens on local providers of services as they attempt to buy more services.

Nevertheless, after the first few years of building the new system of basic skills provision, governors, legislators and others will need an accounting of results. It will not be sufficient for state officials to point to increased enrollments, more hotline calls or more programs in place, particularly when the performance of existing programs is questionable. State leaders and the public will want to know not only how many welfare recipients were enrolled in literacy programs, but also how much their skill levels increased and whether improved basic skills led to employment. By building measurement systems and performance reporting into the funding process for programs now, state officials will be able to answer these types of questions. If they do not, the longer term future of adult basic skills enhancement will be in doubt, since public support usually erodes where there is no accountability.

A major role for the federal government will be to provide resources to answer many of the measurement and assessment-related questions about the provision of basic skills that are currently precluding the implementation of performance-based payment systems for literacy services. While the federal government funds research on these questions, the states should be experimenting with and trying out performance-based contracting systems that use proxies for performance in order to measure basic skills improvement. While it may not be possible to measure exactly the basic skills improvements necessary for getting a better paying job, for example, a good proxy for that improvement would involve a combination of literacy training and actually getting a better paying job. Programs where people actually got better paying jobs could be rewarded as better performers than programs that did not. States should spend time and effort in developing performance-based systems, even where perfect measurement information is not available.

How Can the States Induce Literacy Providers to Employ New Technologies and the Application of Research and Development to Techniques of Imparting Basic Skills to Adults?

Through years of trial and error, adult literacy practitioners have developed a variety of means for teaching adults basic skills. Adults do not learn the same way children learn. Adults with skills deficiencies, by definition, had bad experiences in traditional classrooms. If they are motivated to learn new skills, it is usually because they see a direct link between those skills and achieving specific goals: getting a job or a better job, reading to their children, participating in community activities or keeping up with public events, for example. Teaching techniques and materials that are oriented toward adult concerns are more useful to adults than techniques and learning resources that present knowledge and skills the way the traditional school system presents them.

While educational research is quite clear on the need to link adult concerns with adult learning, applied research and development in the field of adult literacy is quite thin. The field needs more research to develop better techniques of teaching adults or allowing them to learn new skills on their own. A variety of new technologies, based on the computer and new video techniques, hold promise in speeding the learning of adults. New teaching techniques related to imparting portable skills are also being developed. New curricula for adults is also being developed in response to the national concern over literacy. These new approaches are not just new hardware and software, they are whole learning systems. Despite these promising developments, states possess little capacity to explore improved techniques, to evaluate which techniques will be most helpful in teaching targeted groups of adults and to disseminate that information in the field.

States will not be the appropriate vehicles for undertaking much of the research and development required to improve the pedagogy of adult literacy. The investments required for these enterprises will be too large for any one state to justify. The externalities will be great enough to warrant federal or private sector investments in new approaches to learning basic skills. Even though much of the research and technology development necessary to building an effective service system will be accomplished by the federal government and the private sector, the states will have the major responsibility of ensuring that these techniques are used effectively.

States should develop mechanisms to evaluate promising new techniques and technologies and to make sure that the appropriate techniques are infused into the programs operating within the states. States should create staffs whose job it will be to evaluate new techniques for adult learners and training curriculum for literacy providers. Such organizations could also provide assistance to local service providers, including private businesses, to implement these new techniques. These organizations or staff functions need not be located in a single institutions, although some states have found that creating "centers" to handle evaluation and technical assistance have been useful.

In addition, states should create new financing mechanisms for acquiring technology for adult literacy enhancement. States should explore the uses of medium-term financing for learning systems, including bonds. States should determine the feasibility of group purchasing of learning systems financed by short-term or medium term financial instruments or by general fund appropriations. Extensive use of bonds and other financing mechanisms together with group purchasing has reduced the cost of expensive medical technology for hospitals in some states. These programs could serve as a possible model for the purchase of new technologies.

At the very least, local service providers should not have to expense the cost of these investments in the year that they are made. States should help localities and local providers to afford new technologies and new learning systems by providing seed funds and by building into reimbursement rates or performance payment rates the ability for programs to amortize investments in technology. New financing mechanisms should also encourage sharing of technologies among programs, particularly the sharing of learning systems with relatively expensive initial investments that must be amortized quickly. By sharing computer-based instructional systems among high school and adult learning programs, for example, the use of a particular learning system can be extended from five or six hours per day to eight or ten hours. Sharing can make the financial cost-benefit calculations on investing in technologies

work together when they would not work separately.

How Can States Create a More Professional Corp of Teachers and Administrators of Adult Literacy Programs?

Unlike other education systems, the current adult basic education system is manned primarily by part-time teachers and administrators, many of which have primary employment responsibilities in other ares. For existing adult literacy staff, there is little incentive and virtually no support to learn the most effective techniques of imparting basic skills. Consequently, staff frequently use inappropriate materials, and provide instruction in ways which are inappropriate to the needs of the adults they are serving. The lack of literacy instruction appropriate and tailored to the needs of adult learners, combined with limited recognition of the need for skill enhancement and limited incentives for learners to participate in basic skill programs, result in limited participation in literacy programs, high drop out rates and limited learning gains.

In building an effective system of literacy provision, the states will have to address the issue of professional development for literacy providers. At present, literacy staff — volunteer tutors and paid staff alike — receive almost no pre-service training and virtually no in-service professional development. The primary cause of this situation is the lack of an infrastructure to require, support and enhance the upgrading of skills. States will have to build the infrastructure to upgrade the skills of literacy providers if they are to enhance the effectiveness of programs. They must also set standards for literacy staff and require that literacy instructors and administrators meet these standards if they are to receive public funds. This must be done for all literacy providers, whether programs are delivered by tutors, community based organizations, school systems, community colleges or others.

Professionalization is closely tied to the need to evaluate and disseminate the best practices in the field. In order to provide professional development opportunities for adult literacy teachers and administrators, states will have to mandate in-service and pre-service training of teachers, provide a curriculum for adult literacy providers and a mechanism through which adult literacy teachers can receive more compensation if they achieve a more professional status.

At the same time, states must recognize that the field of adult literacy is not static. No one system of pedagogy or technique of teaching is appropriate for all types of literacy enhancement. As a result, states must be careful not to allow professionalization to rigidify the field, as it has in other areas of professional endeavor. In particular, states must not develop academically-based training systems. Rather, training programs should be practice-

based. Because research and practice have clearly demonstrated that preparation for elementary and secondary education is inappropriate for adult literacy instruction, states should not use this system as the model or institutional base for training. States will have to move carefully to create careers in adult literacy provision without building difficult barriers to entry into the profession and without stifling innovation and creativity, particularly in the private sector.

How Can More Resources Be Generated at the State and Local Levels to Address the Problem?

Like the federal government, states have historically underinvested in the adult literacy service delivery system, yet in recent years states have begun to devote substantially more resources to adult basic education than in the past. In 1987, for example, states spent about $260 million to provide adult basic education instruction at grade levels 0-8. Total state and local spending through the adult education programs monitored by the U.S. Department of Education amounted to about $318 million. (This figure should be considered somewhat low, because many state and local programs do not report spending on adult education to the federal government unless they are required to in order to maintain federal matching amounts. In a perverse twist, the federal regulation requiring that states maintain local effort causes states to underreport current spending in case an actual cutback occurs in the next year.)

While the total amounts allocated to adult basic education by the states seem substantial, the cost per student is very low. In 1987 state and federal funds spent on adult basic education (grade levels 0-8) amounted to only $143 per student. Part of the reason that this cost per student is so low, of course, is that students do not stay in programs very long. Enrollment figures are somewhat misleading, since students attending adult basic education classes are counted as enrollees whether they stay one week or one year. Another reason why the spending per pupil is low, however, is because adult education programs pay instructors very little, provide little support to students and generally operate on a shoestring. By contrast, spending on elementary and secondary education per pupil amounted to $3,983 per pupil during the 1986-87 school year.

State spending on adult basic education varies dramatically by state. As Table 2 illustrates, well over half of all state spending on adult basic education instruction occurred in just two states — California and Michigan. Map 3 illustrates per capita state and local spending on adult education. Wide variations in levels of effort exist across the country.

TABLE 2: STATE AND LOCAL SPENDING ON ADULT EDUCATION, 1987

State	Amount
CALIFORNIA	$120,450,732
MICHIGAN	81,682,841
INDIANA	12,655,687
NEW JERSEY	11,349,277
NEW YORK	10,067,790
NORTH CAROLINA	9,438,628
TEXAS	7,464,988
FLORIDA	6,845,518
MASSACHUSETTS	6,280,255
OREGON	4,468,089
NEVADA	4,094,255
CONNECTICUT	4,033,671
SOUTH CAROLINA	3,889,812
WISCONSIN	3,582,496
OHIO	3,427,506
UTAH	3,342,000
ARKANSAS	2,381,719
IOWA	2,015,208
MINNESOTA	1,887,901
MARYLAND	1,764,780
WEST VIRGINIA	1,559,907
LOUISIANA	954,681
GEORGIA	915,078
VIRGINIA	862,937
ARIZONA	784,752
NEW MEXICO	778,000
HAWAII	728,801
ILLINOIS	700,000
PENNSYLVANIA	620,357
MISSOURI	480,178
MAINE	448,446
ALABAMA	434,960
RHODE ISLAND	394,808
WASHINGTON	382,450
MONTANA	366,521
OKLAHOMA	304,011
KENTUCKY	226,184
COLORADO	225,500
NEW HAMPSHIRE	199,894
KANSAS	188,091
NEBRASKA	158,190
MISSISSIPPI	155,500
ALASKA	155,006
DELAWARE	147,546
IDAHO	147,378
WYOMING	131,418
VERMONT	71,700
TENNESSEE	65,392
NORTH DAKOTA	51,444
SOUTH DAKOTA	44,050
U.S. TOTAL	$318,303,870

Source: U.S. Department of Education

Although some states have made substantial commitments to adult basic skills, most do not allocate significant resources to the problems of literacy in America. As Map 3 illustrates, support for adult basic education does not seem to vary substantially by region. While state spending is high in northern industrial states such as Michigan and New York, it is also high in states such as Arkansas and North Carolina. States with high immigrant populations, such as California, are spending substantial sums on literacy. Despite the fact that southern governors have recognized the problem of literacy as a very high priority, state support is spotty in that region. Reported spending in some industrial states, such as Pennsylvania and Illinois, is also very low.

Patterns of state support relate to the individual political and economic situations in the states. In North Carolina, for example, the Governor and Legislature have focused attention on the problem and new resources have been allocated. Virginia has just doubled its appropriation for literacy services. In Arkansas, new resources are expected next year. In Mississippi, the Governor will have to fight for new resources for adult literacy as part of his education reform package next year. California and Texas are clearly responding to the influx of immigrants and their need to learn English and other skills. Michigan has made adult education a keystone in its economic development strategy and has devoted substantial resources to basic skills for employed adults. New York has recently appropriated over $50 million in additional funds for adult basic education and will probably add more resources next year.

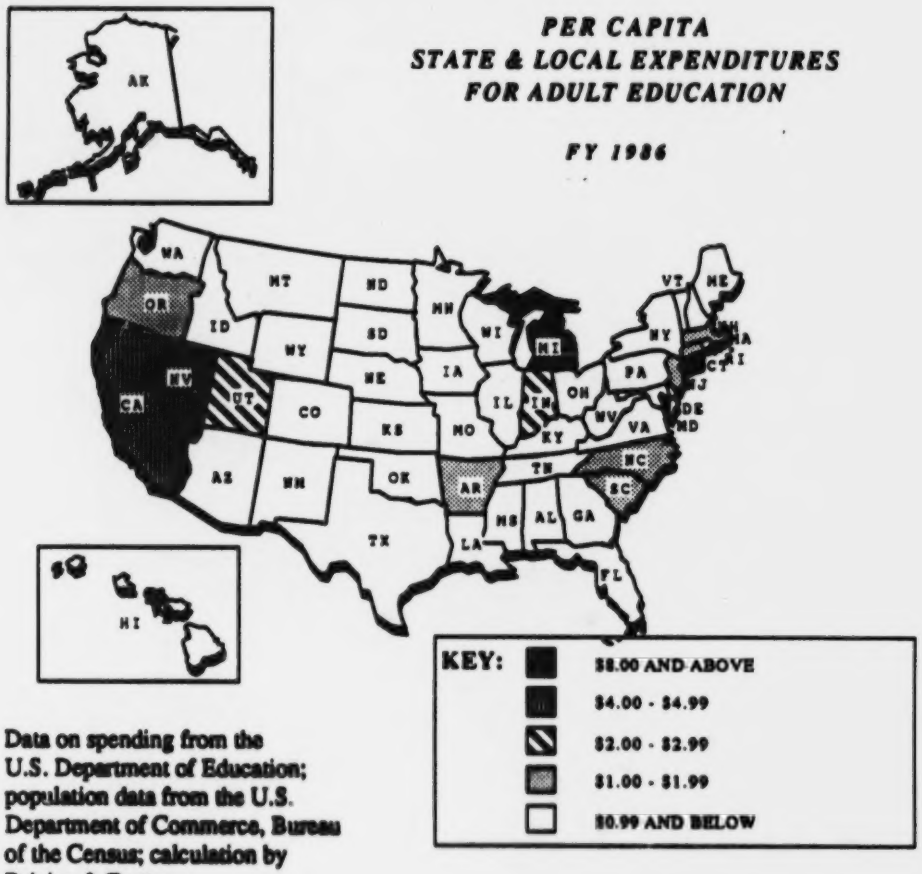
To meet the challenge of basic enhancement, states will have to spend more. States will have to increase total spending and they will have to increase spending per pupil in order to provide quality programs that have an impact on the problem. States not only must spend more per pupil and overall to support basic skills improvement, they will have to spend in different ways. Several ways that spending can be increased and improved at the same time are presented as options:

States Can Make Basic Skills an Entitlement. By making the achievement of a certain level of basic skills an entitlement, states would be committing themselves to substantial expenditures over many years. Advocates of this approach argue that schools and other educational institutions have failed many adults and that state governments have the responsibility to offer educational opportunities far past the high school years to those who do not have adequate basic skills.

MAP 3

PER CAPITA
STATE & LOCAL EXPENDITURES
FOR ADULT EDUCATION

FY 1986



Source: Data on spending from the U.S. Department of Education; population data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; calculation by Brizius & Foster.

States Can Increase Funding Through a Central Agency Responsible for Planning and Coordinating Services. While funds for adult basic skills can be drawn from a variety of state and federal sources, states should consider placing incremental funds in the hands of people at a central level who can use incentives to draw state agency efforts together. At least until the debate about an institutional home for literacy is resolved, new funds or a portion of all new funds should be channeled through coordinating agencies. One of the most difficult issues facing governors and legislators today is that they have few vehicles other than departments of education through which to channel new funds for adult basic skills enhancement. As state officials devote more state funds to express their concern over

basic skills, they are perhaps inadvertently strengthening systems that they know are not viable for the long term effort in improving literacy provision.

States Can Tie All New Funding to the Achievement of Performance Standards, Even Though Measurement Systems Are Imperfect. States can specify both output and input performance standards for local providers of services receiving additional funds through the state. Input standards can improve training and evaluation components of local programs. Output standards can tie payments to specific achievements of students, including retention, movement along a testing scale and getting a job or improving an existing job.

The means through which increased spending will be generated once again relate to the overall goals of the literacy program. In most states that have seen large increases in state spending for adult basic skills, the linkage between basic skills and economic development has been strongly felt in the legislature and in public opinion. In other states, the need to assimilate large immigrant populations has been the driving force behind resource increases. Generating support for increased resources to build a new system of literacy enhancement will be a major challenge for state leaders, a challenge that the federal government can assist them in meeting.

Not all states will respond to this challenge. As in all areas of public policy, some states will choose not to participate in a national effort to improve basic skills. Others will resist national priority setting by the Congress and the President. This is the nature of a federal system. In designing a federal role that is supportive of a strong state role in enhancing basic skills of adults, it will be necessary — as always — to consider strong incentives to state behavior and disincentives to neglecting national priorities.

THE STATE ROLE AND THE FEDERAL ROLE

For a national literacy policy to be effective, the federal role must be supportive of the primary state role in planning, implementing and managing the development of a new system of literacy enhancement. To date, the federal government has confined its activities in literacy to modest increases in the adult education budgets and to encouragement of voluntary efforts. Much more must be done. Joining with the states and local providers of services, the federal government must do nothing less than build an entirely new system of basic skills education for adults. This effort will involve setting new federal priorities, major restructuring at the federal level, the allocation of substantial new resources in flexible ways.

Since this effort must be accomplished through the states, a major part of the federal role will be to provide fair and effective incentives for states to respond to federal leadership in building a new system of basic skills enhancement for adults. Federal support should be designed to help states coordinate services and to assist them in providing the infrastructure that will make a new system of basic education a strong system, one with substantial political resilience and known for quality programs. Specifically, the federal role in adult literacy should include the following elements:

Leadership

The President should draw attention to the literacy crisis in America in his State of the Union Message and in a special message to follow. He should explain the severity of the problem to all Americans and call on political, economic and community leaders to join in the quest for a solution. The President should explain the clear linkages between literacy and solving other problems, such as welfare dependency, ensuring the health and opportunities for children, the need to create new jobs and become more productive, or international competitiveness. The President should stress the importance of providing the literacy skills necessary for a fast-changing world — skills that can be used in the future rather than learned and lost. When these and other issues are addressed at the Presidential level, the relationship of literacy to these issues should be continuously stressed.

In this context, the President should challenge governors, legislators, mayors, county leaders as well as state and local school leaders to address seriously the issue of adult literacy. Leaders at the state and local level who have helped raise awareness of the depth and severity of the problem should also be challenged by the President to provide resources to address the issue. The President could address a session of the National Governors' Association or the National Conference of State Legislatures to raise the issue of literacy and to explain how the federal government will support state initiatives. He should lay the problem squarely at the doorstep of the states and cast the federal role as one of all-out support. Included in that federal support for a strong state response to the basic skills crisis would be at least the following initiatives:

- To focus federal efforts to enhance adult literacy, the President would create a cabinet council, composed of the Secretaries of Education, Labor, Commerce and Health & Human Services to oversee federal efforts and ensure coordination within the federal establishment. This cabinet council on adult literacy would be accountable to and staffed from the White House.

• The President would propose the creation of a national center for adult learning, which would be responsible for policy related research, applied research and development and technical assistance to the states to advance the state of the art in basic skills development.

• The President would propose a new basic skills title for the Job Training and Partnership Act. This title and associated funding would focus on workforce literacy. Demonstration programs with large and small businesses, state and local governments would be intended to provide models for state actions in the future.

• The President would support the addition of a new and important goal to the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act — the improvement of basic skills for adults. States would be encouraged to use vocational education funds to provide remedial education and basic skills improvement for young adults. The workforce literacy provisions of vocational education would be fully funded.

• The President would support increased funding for the Adult Education Act and would propose substantial new funding for English as a Second Language instructional programs within the federal adult education program. This increase would be intended, in part, to take part of the burden off states to provide ESL instruction and allow them to reprogram adult education funds to other priorities, including workforce literacy.

• The federal government would also support the provision of funds for training for teachers of adult basic skills. The federal government would provide funds to the states for establishing organizations and staffs dedicated to the improvement of staff training and dissemination of the state of the art in providing basic skills instruction to adults.

• The President would support the application of technology and the improvement of professionalization of the adult literacy workforce through a series of actions that would allow federal funds to be used to upgrade technology and provide teacher training.

• Most important to the states and local governments, the President would propose a series of actions that would free up new resources for states to deal with the basic skills issue, especially in the workforce. At the same time, the federal government would provide incentives and disincentives for state actions that would comport with federal priorities in providing basic skills development to adults. These actions are detailed in the next section of this chapter.

The President should also increase efforts to raise public awareness about the issue through the media. At the same time, the President should recognize that public awareness

alone creates a demand for services that will not be met unless additional resources and efforts are focused on enhancing adult literacy. As experience in the states has shown, national appeals for involvement in literacy efforts should be focused more on potential students than on potential volunteers. The President should point out that voluntary efforts alone will not be enough to solve even a small part of the basic skills problems among adults in the United States.

The effect of these actions on state leadership would be substantial. Governors, legislators, local officials and others would be challenged to put teeth into previous proclamations of support for literacy efforts. By clearly indicating federal support through a White House coordinating body, the administration would provide a single contact point for state leaders in fashioning a partnership between state and federal efforts. The composition of the cabinet council would also signal federal interest in using federal resources from federal welfare and social services programs, economic development programs as well as job training and education programs to enhance adult literacy.

Flexible Resources

The federal government should increase resources available to the states to fund adult basic skills programs and to give incentives to individuals and businesses to participate in literacy enhancement. New resources could be channeled through existing adult education programs as well as welfare, social services, job training and community development programs. The federal government should also consider providing incentives for small businesses to participate in workplace literacy programs, perhaps through the tax system or through preference for loans and other subsidies.

Specifically:

• The federal law should allow governors to re-allocate for basic skills up to 8 percent of all funds flowing through states or localities in programs including the Adult Education Act, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act, and the Social Services Block Grant. Governors already have control over 8 percent of the Job Training Partnership Act funds and in most cases will set policy for spending the new Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Act funds. These re-allocations would be for the support of basic skills programs for adults. In the case of the Adult Education Act, where all funds are already allocated to basic skills, the effect of the reallocation power would be for the governor to have control of at least 8 percent of the funds in order to allow better coordination, especially for workforce literacy efforts.

• To receive funds for basic skills from these programs, governors would have to establish state mechanisms of their choosing to coordinate the delivery of basic skills services. Each coordinating staff or agency must establish a statewide plan with measurable goals for enhancing basic skills. The governors would be required to report annually to the federal cabinet council on progress toward achieving those goals.

• The federal government should provide some seed funds for the establishment of planning and coordinating bodies. These funds should also be used to help states plan for participation in workforce literacy demonstration programs and to cooperate with the national center for adult learning. Funding could be limited to about $200,000 for large states and $100,000 for smaller states.

Even with this flexibility, states will need to be encouraged to reallocate federal funds to basic efforts. Without growth in these programs, states would have to take funds away from local providers of job training, for example, in order to fund a literacy program down the street. Alternatively, states could require current job training providers to adjust their programs to focus on basic skills. The best encouragement, of course, would be resumed growth in funding levels of federal programs focused on the needs of adults. Welfare reform, proposed funding improvements in ESL programs and other federal actions in recent months provide some hope that federal resources that could be diverted to basic skills will grow enough to provide a reasonable incentive to states to do so.

Another difficulty faced by both the federal and state governments in redirecting federal resources to literacy enhancement will be the fact that no central authority at the state level controls the flow of federal funds to local programs. JTPA funds, for example, flow primarily to Service Delivery Areas and are not easily diverted by governors. Adult education funds flow through state education departments, most of which are independent of gubernatorial authority. Other funds flow primarily to local governments, with little gubernatorial control over the use of funds. The cabinet council at the federal level will have to support governors who attempt to coordinate and target funding to basic skills programs. This can be done by supporting legislative changes permitting gubernatorial flexibility in the use of a percentage of various program funds and can also be supported by waivers of federal legislation and policy.

Priority Setting

Another important role for the federal government would be to require the states to set specific priorities and target federal and state funds for basic skills enhancement. While

many states have faced the targeting problem, many have not. The federal government could give incentives to states to set priorities for literacy enhancement based on an analysis of the relationship between basic skills enhancement and federal-state goals. One way to accomplish this task is to condition the ability of a governor to use federal funds in categorical programs for literacy on the publication of a literacy plan that sets specific targets and goals. Governors would be required to set specific targets, consistent with a short list of federal priorities. Those priorities might include welfare recipients, unemployed workers, recent immigrants and, under the thrust of recommendations here and elsewhere, would certainly include a new focus on the currently employed. Federal funds would be allocated by the governor from various state and federal sources, such as JTPA or JOBS funds, to those target groups.

States wishing to open enrollment for basic skills enhancement to adults not fitting federally allowable categories could provide funds from state resources. This arrangement would give states an incentive to provide state funds for serving visible groups not on the federal priority list, such as prisoners, probationers and parolees or currently employed workers seeking to upgrade skills in order to get better jobs.

A crucial question for the federal government will be whether or not to require targeting not only according to categories of adults but also according to their current levels of skills. It would be possible, for example, for the federal government to restrict the use of flexible funds for literacy to those adults with very low skills, forcing the states to fund politically popular programs such as GED preparation and other adult secondary education programs. On the other hand, the federal government may not want to tie the hands of states in deciding whether or not to target very low skilled people as opposed to people with higher levels of skills seeking advancement. On balance, it would probably be better for the federal government to leave this targeting decision to the states.

Research, Development and Dissemination of "Best Practices"

The state of the art in teaching basic skills to adults can be improved by a concerted effort to research new techniques of teaching and learning, evaluate promising approaches and disseminate the results to the states. State policymakers face a bewildering array of competing approaches to teaching literacy. Volunteers stress the one-on-one approach. Community based organizations teach literacy in the context of the community lives of students. Classroom teaching dominates in adult education settings such as schools and community colleges. A variety of new technologies are promoted to teach literacy, including

PALS, ICON and others. Some researchers stress generic skills such as reading, while others favor teaching functional competencies that are job-related. Still others advocate methods to teach portable skills. English as a second language educators have developed still other approaches to their unique teaching needs.

It is possible, even likely, that each of these approaches are valid in certain situations with certain students. State officials—from political leaders to program managers—have little information on which to evaluate one approach over the other. In addition, state officials and local program providers are aware of new and more effective teaching and learning techniques only through an informal network. States could benefit greatly from a federally sponsored institution that would commission or carry out research and development activities in the field of literacy, help states evaluate the most appropriate approaches for their needs and disseminate the results of research, demonstrations and evaluations.

A national center for adult learning should be created to help support the states in providing the highest quality programs possible. The charter of this new institution should include applied research and development of better ways to teach reading, writing, computation, communications and problem-solving skills to adults. The exploration of the uses of new technologies to provide literacy skills should be a prime goal of the Institute. The center should also act as a clearinghouse for states, localities, and providers to learn about more effective methods, programs, organizational structures and other elements of effective literacy efforts. The center should also help assess needs for literacy services and help develop measurement, assessment and evaluation tools for the field. The programmatic focus of the center should be to help improve the quality of the current system of providing literacy skills and, building upon the current base, develop a new and more comprehensive system of quality services.

The states could also be encouraged to create capacities for evaluating and disseminating the information flowing from the federal center and from other sources. State resource capacities could be built through a federal incentive matching program. Under this program, the governor would assign one or more groups in each state to be responsible for improving the quality of teaching and learning in adult basic skills programs. A key focus of these state capacity building programs would be to help policymakers implement quality improvements in existing programs while developing performance-based systems for rewarding local providers of basic skills services.

Student Assessment and Performance Measurement

If states are to improve the system of literacy provision and make it more cost-effective, substantial work needs to be accomplished in the areas of student assessment and performance measurement. Ideally, states would pay providers for moving adults along the literacy continuum and pay only when certain performance levels had been reached. This payment system would give incentives to providers of literacy to use the best practices and most cost-effective means of teaching basic skills. The problem with this approach is that student assessment measures are not available to judge how much progress individuals have made as a result of literacy training. Although some tests are used now in states, they are not considered to be reliable enough to base funding decisions on them. In addition, performance measures not directly related to test scores need to be explored. In the area of workplace literacy, for example, performance improvement on the job may be an important basis on which to base payments to providers, including private businesses, who undertake literacy efforts.

The federal government should support state efforts to make literacy programs more effective by investing in the development of student assessment instruments and in the development of performance measurement systems. A major part of the responsibility of a new center for adult learning should be to develop measures of performance for basic skills enhancement. States could then apply these measures to their programs, adjusting for the unique circumstances of local providers and adult students. The development of assessment tools and performance indicators will be particularly important for states that want to experiment with voucher systems and incentives for individuals and firms. For incentives to work properly, states must be able to measure not just program enrollment, but actual progress in improving basic skills among adults.

The federal government should also encourage states to develop performance contracting systems for public providers and to provide incentives for private provision of literacy services by requiring that at least half of federal basic skills funds be allocated on a performance basis. Performance standards for states should also be applied in a fashion similar to the performance standards specified under the new youth employment program. Federal funds provided through the new demonstration title of JTPA should be set aside for states to use in experimental voucher and other incentive programs in the private sector based on measurements of improved student performance.

Professional Development

Although the states are the appropriate level of government at which to stimulate the professional development of adult education administrators and staff, the federal government could support professional development by building requirements for for pre-service and in-service training for instructors and administrators into existing federal programs which fund literacy training and by setting aside a small percentage of program funds to be devoted to staff training and professional development. The federal government should enhance the development of the state of the art in literacy instruction by creating a national institute for basic skills for basic and applied research. It should also provide funds for the creation and development of state centers for adult literacy, whose tasks would include the professional development of literacy providers.

CONCLUSION

Although states have begun the long process of building a new system of literacy provision, they face many difficult challenges in the years ahead. This paper has prescribed several key actions states must take to play a central role in enhancing basic skills of adults. By providing leadership and support to the states, the federal government can catalyze action in the states. Together, state and federal governments can provide the infrastructure for effective action at the local level. Federal leadership must move quickly to support the state role. If federal leaders take action, state leaders will also respond to the challenges of a national policy to enhance adult literacy.

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